

THE
FREE-MASONS
ACCUSATION
AND
DEFENCE.

In Six Genuine LETTERS.

Between a GENTLEMAN in the Country,
and his SON a Student in the *Temple*.

WHEREIN

The whole Affair of MASONRY is fairly
debated, and all the Arguments for and
against that FRATERNITY are curiously
and impartially handled.

LONDON:

Printed for J. PEELE, at *Locke's-Head* in
Pater-noster-Row; and N. BLANDFORD at
the *London-Gazette*, *Charing-Cross*. 1726.

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LETTER I.

Dear Child,

I Doubt not but you will be somewhat surprized at my sending this Letter after such an extraordinary Manner; but one Article in your last has so alarmed me, that unwilling to wait the Delays of the Post, I have sent *John* herewith, who has promised the utmost Expedition, and to deliver it into your own Hands.

Methinks I see you redden already, as conscious to your self that you never of-

fended me willingly: No, my Dear, so far from offending, you have charmed me with your Ingenuity and Sincerity; Concern and Paternal Fondness are the Occasion of this Letter, not Displeasure or Pique, as you may probably imagine.

To undeceive you at once; for I am as eager to tell, as you are to learn the Cause of this Emotion; Know, Child, that among other Things in your Letter, you tell me you are to be made a *Free-Mason* next Week: This, my Dear, is the Occasion of all my Concern; This the Reason why the Bearer brings you this with such unusual Haste, while I wait your Answer with the utmost Expectation.

Now will you say to your self, what is come to my Father? He never before interfered with my Pleasures; nor have I taken any but the most Lawful and Innocent. True, my Child, you are the Pride of my Age, and the Pleasure of my Heart. I know the Generosity of your Temper too well to curb or restrain you; nor shall you ever find in me the Sourness and Austerity of some Fathers; but, on the contrary, the same Candour and Familiarity which I hope have already too much endeared me to you, to make you slight, or take amiss, any Thing I shall think fit to object against your present Undertaking.

And

And first, give me leave to ask you, whether there is Any Thing or Nothing in this Affair of *Masonry*? If Any Thing, it is necessary to enquire whether it be Good or Evil; if Good, why thus clouded and concealed? If Evil, why practiced? If there be nothing in it, why do they magnify and cry it up to such a Degree? Why is the airy Phantom so gaudily dress'd? And to what purpose is this pretended Privacy, these Signs, these Whispers, this Cant and Juggle, but to gull and snare the credulous and inquisitive, and feast themselves at the Expence of their foolish Profelytes, palliating their former Follies by the yet greater Fooleries of others?

Is it contrary to divine or human Laws, that they are afraid to own their Practices? That their Mysteries or Orgyes are performed in such remote Places with such Privacy and Watchfulness? Or is the whole Affair so silly, they are heartily ashamed of it, and therefore agree, one and all, to draw in their Friends and Acquaintance to become as errant Asses as themselves?

The Government must be the better or the worse for these Meetings and Combinations. If it is the better, we have good Reason to imagine that they who have so magnified and wire-drawn the Subject, would
not

not fail to let us know wherein they were serviceable to Church or State, had they the least Handle or Pretence.

Does it make them better Christians, better Subjects, better Friends? Do they acquit the Duties of Father, Husband, or Child, with more Delicacy than the rest of Mankind? Are they better or wiser Magistrates, fairer Dealers, or have they better Characters than other Men? If in all these they do not excel their Fellow-Creatures, their pretended Orders and Distinctions are either to no Purpose at all, or to very bad Purposes.

But this Devil Curiosity is the Fiend which leads so many Headlong into this *No Mystery*. This is the only Excuse they plead for running themselves implicitly into an Affair, the Consequences of which they cannot foresee, because the whole Matter is kept a Secret till they have actually enlisted themselves, and cannot get off their Bargain. Curiosity is a noble, a manly Virtue, when it leads to laudable Attempts and generous Enterprizes, when it fires our Minds with a Desire of Knowledge, and a Thirst after Truth; but when we have an itching to know Things Immaterial and Impertinent, it is a childish and effeminate Vice: Any Fool may incite our Curiosity, give us Uneasiness, and lead us in the Dark at Pleasure.

And

And indeed, how can any Man go in but as a Fool, when he does not know what he is about? The Matter is, he is to be made a *Mason*; but how, is to be a Secret till he is a *Mason*. This is ridiculous to the last Degree; this headlong way of running into they know not what, is no where practised but among these People. All other Orders and Distinctions of Men give you a Bill of Fare, and let you know what you are to trust to beforehand.

This artful way of concealing, or pretending to conceal something *in Petto*, has drawn many Men of some Sense, but more Curiosity, to herd themselves with this Crew, who are now heartily ashamed of the Affair, and never more affronted, than when you call them *Free-Masons*.

But a Man must have very little regard to Honour or Conscience, who hazards both, to satisfy an impertinent Curiosity, and binds himself by so sacred a Tye as an Oath, to keep and observe he knows not what.

The Women, in particular, have a strange Opinion of them; by them they are concluded utter Enemies to the Fair Sex, who, for the generality, have them in the greatest Abhorrence,

Your

Your Mother and Sisters have wept incessantly ever since the Receipt of your Letter, and here is as much Lamentation in the Country, as if you were actually under Sentence of Death. Indeed, I cannot say, that I was ever so concern'd at any thing in my Life. Miss Kitty vows she will die before she will have a *Free-Mason*. I never saw her so incens'd in my Life. If then you value my Esteem, the Love of your Mother and Sisters, and have any Hopes of being happy with that dear Creature I have so long wish'd to be yours, I conjure you, run not headlong into this Error, but disengage yourself on any Terms; nay, tho' you have given your Word; for Promises made to such Wretches are of no Force, especially when a Father commands the contrary. Your Compliance with this Request, will ever endear you to me; but a contumacious Neglect of my Commands, may probably let you see more Resentment than ever you thought to find, from

Your Affectionate Father, &c.

N. B. The Postscript being upon Private Affairs, as Remittance of Money, &c. we thought it needless to be inserted.

LETTER II.

S I R,

I Receiv'd yours with inexpressible Joy, and read it with as great Surprize. *John*, who was an Eye-Witness, can better inform you of its Effects. I never was so alarm'd in my Life ; for, indeed, I never received such a Letter from you before. I am sorry I should give any Occasion for so warm an Admonition, but must plead in my own Excuse, that I wrote that Particular without any Thoughts of its meeting with so severe a Construction. But, as you are so candid to mix your Anger with Sweetness and Complaisance, and have so far condescended, as to give me your Reasons why you would not have me be a *Free-Mason*, I was much more charm'd with so generous a Condescension in a Father, who need but Command, whose Paternal Tenderneſs has made Duty a Pleasure, and rivetted a grateful Esteem so fast in my Soul, that nothing, no not ill Usage itself, shall ever efface it.

In Compliance, therefore, to your Commands, I promise you, Sir, that I will not advance one Step farther in this Affair without your Consent and Approbation ; but so well am I assured of your Impartiality, that I do not utterly despair of obtaining your

B

Permission

Permission to proceed in this Affair, notwithstanding, at present, you are so prejudiced against it.

Nor have I proceeded so far, but that I can, with all the Ease imaginable, disengage myself. It is not my own seeking, but the particular Intreaty of some, my very good Friends, who have brought this Affair on the Carpet.

Sir *Thomas* ——— is Master of a Lodge, the Members of which, he assures me, are all Gentlemen of Honour and Fortune, and their Behaviour the most innocent in Life; they are under the severest Restrictions; nor is it less than Expulsion, for any Member to be guilty of obscene or blasphemous Discourses; so far from being ludicrous in their Conversation, that, on the contrary, the most solid and sublime Subjects are there discussed for general Improvement. They have in their Lodge several Gentlemen, Sons of Art, each very eminent in his Profession: These Gentlemen, at the Command of the Master, are obliged to read a Lecture upon whatsoever Topic he shall direct. This gives the Brethren of the Lodge an Insight into all Arts and Sciences, and furnishes them with a Competency of Universal Knowledge, so necessary and commendable in a Gentleman; but, of all Arts, none are more amply explained than *Geometry*, the Mother and Touch-stone of all other Sciences. The *Free-Masons* have,
for

(II)

for many Ages, been Masters of the greatest Secrets in that Noble Science; and, if I may rely on a Gentleman in whom is centred all that is nicely Honourable, I dare affirm, that many Arcana in Geometry are confin'd only to that Fraternity, who are so cautious lest they should discover them to any unworthy Person, that a Man must be a long while among them before he is trusted with the intrinsic Secrets of *Masonry*.

If, therefore, the Conversation of good and honest Men, the friendly Communication of Knowledge, and the united Endeavours of a whole Body of Men for the Promotion of useful Learning, is prejudicial? then is *Masonry* prejudicial; then ought *Masons* to be expell'd Civil Society, and banish'd the Realm; but if, on the contrary, a Conversation the most innocent and instructive, a Brotherly Love the most amiable and humane, and, in a Word, an universal Benevolence to all Mankind, and an implicit Obedience to the Establish'd Constitutions of Church and State, are commendable, then is *Masonry* commendable, then are *Masons* to be esteem'd good Christians, good Subjects, and good Friends, and merit the good Opinion of all Honourable and Impartial Men.

It is very hard, the *Free-Masons* must therefore be thought guilty of All the Common People lay to their Charge, because

they have but a bare Negative in their Defence ; but as they know their Innocence, they laugh at the ungenerous Imputations of the Vulgar, and chuse rather to be thought Conjurers, and what not, than to be cajo ed out of their Secrets, and make a Sacrifice of their Mystery to the Clamour of the Pop ulace.

That the Ladies are a little jealous of the Fraternity is natural, from their Innate Curiosity, by reason the Mysteries of *Masonry* are secluded from that Sex ; but so far are *Masons* from slighting that agreeable Part of the Creation, that, I fear, too many of the Brotherhood love 'em but too well. But that my Dear *Kitty*, who is next you and my most Honour'd Mother, the Centre and Object of my future Happiness, that she, I say, should have so little Regard to all my Vows, to all my Sufferings, as to be alarm'd at such a Trifle, is what surprizes and shocks me ; and, though I love her almost to Distraction, I would not give way to her Humour in this Particular, tho' it cost me many a bitter Pang. But if you, Sir, forbid, I shall implicitly submit. Your Will shall be my Law ; for I would sacrifice not only *Masonry*, but Life itself to so good a Father,

I am, &c.

L E T

LETTER III.

Dear Child,

I am extremely pleased my Letter came time enough to prevent your intended Institution ; and tho' to you it may seem a Matter of little or no Moment, yet to me it appears no less momentous than the very Crisis of your future Prosperity.

You have, my Dear, given me a very alluring Character of *Masonry*, but it is all upon Trust, nor have you experienced one, Particular ; you must therefore excuse me if I do not altogether believe it : Not but Sir *Thomas* — bears a pretty good Character ; but he is a great Sensualist, a Man of Indolence and Pleasure ; and that may appear excusable in his Conduct, which in yours would meet with a Construction much more severe ; his Fortune is large, and he has no Employment ; Pleasure therefore is the Business of such Men, Extravagance in them is but an elegant Way of Living, and Libertinism is but Affability. But consider, my Son, you are to cultivate your Fortune and Endowments ; from you much is expected, and the Eyes of all your Friends are upon you ; my Hopes are centred in you ; and your good or bad Conduct

duet will make my remaining Thread of Life happy or otherwise. Sir *Thomas*, notwithstanding his great Fortune, will, in the End, go out like the Snuff of a Candle; he will leave this World without doing any Good, or, probably, much Hurt; for why, he has nothing to do but spend his Money; the World has no farther Use for him, but as he fills up the Number of Invalids, who help to devour the Fruits of the Earth; and he has no other Business here, but to take his Pleasure, to run his Race, go off the Stage, and be forgot.

But you, my Child, ought to have nobler Views; the Men of Pleasure are but as Reptiles; 'tis the Men of Business, are *Men indeed*; and such a one would I have you: I hope one Day to see whole Crowds of such Animals thrust aside, to make Way for you, while you ascend the Seat of Justice, and arbitrate the Lives and Fortunes of the less significant Vulgar.

This is an Ambition so natural to a thinking Man, that I shall not apologize for it in the least; but, on the contrary, expect the like from you. What is a Man without Ambition? Hope at least, and endeavour to deserve, Fortune may one Day crown Merit and repay Industry. Let these Reflections therefore, my dear Child, stimulate in you the strongest Desire after Honour; without which Motive all Arts and Sciences would die, and an universal
Indo-

Idolence would possess all Mankind ; and where there is this noble Emulation and Thirst after Honour, there is no Room for Trifles ; of which *Masonry* is not the least : A Man truly intent on his Studies, ought to avoid all Allurements which may alienate his Affections, or stop him in his Pursuit of Preferment : Business ought to be the Pleasure of Men of Business, as Pleasure is the Business of the Men of Pleasure ; and, believe me, he who does not take Pleasure in his Business, had better follow no Business at all, but be a Man of Pleasure at once.

Now will you say this is very hard upon Men of Business, that they must take no Pleasure. Must Men of Pleasure then have the only Enjoyment of this Life, and the bitter Draught be only for the active Part of Mankind ? To this I answer, that Pleasure is not more or less so for the Common Acceptation of the Word, but as it is more or less agreeable to its Object. I am the best Judge of what is pleasant or unpleasant to me, therefore that which pleases me is my Pleasure. I may take as much Pleasure in an active Life as another may in a Life of Indolence and Sensual Enjoyments. When therefore a Man has a Desire to rise in the World, all the Steps taken in such a Pursuit, so far as they contribute to the intended View, so far may they be called Parts of the Pleasure in Prospect.

If therefore you would be my Pleasure, let Business be yours; you are past a School Boy now, and stand in no need of Holidays, and for Acquaintance, the fewer you have the better, till there is a Necessity for your publick Appearance: You are yet a Student, Books are your best Companions; the time may come when you would study if you could; therefore now is the Time to lay the Foundation of future Greatness, now is the Time to improve the Mind and polish the Genius: All Avocations from Study, any other than proper Relaxations, are hurtful: Nay, to an industrious Mind, one Study is a proper Relaxation from another. If you want to learn Geometry, or any other Part of the Mathematicks, there are, I doubt not, able Masters in *London*, who can teach you much more than you can learn at any *Club of Free-Masons*; and now I have been led to mention it, if it will not interfere with your other Studies, I would have you learn the Mathematicks of some good and able Master; *the best is best cheap*; be sure go to the Fountain Head; the Mathematicks will help you in every Thing; Mathematical Demonstration being the ultimate Determiner of all Things.

The Character I would have you acquire in the World, is that of an ingenious sober Man; this will make you be taken Notice of by those in whose Power it is to serve you;

you ; and so long as you maintain that Character, you need not fear Success ; the Sober and Ingenious must be employ'd, while the Sor, tho' he is ever so ingenious, is not to be trusted ; Men of Pleasure indeed drink with him, and help him spend his Money, yet they seldom or never help him to get any.

I would therefore have you lay these Thoughts of *Masonry* intirely aside ; for unless you assign better Reasons than you did in your last, I shall never be induced to give my Consent for your being a *Mason*. You have, indeed, given me an ostentatious Description, which you only had by Hear-say ; you know nothing of their so-much suspected Privacies and secret Transactions, and glad am I you do not. You are however become a notable Champion for the *Free-Masons*, and have drawn out your Defence in Form ; yet have not answer'd one single Assertion of mine, as, by a Re-perusal of my First you will find. You tell me Sir *Thomas* is a Man of Honour and Fortune : That he is a Man of Fortune, I allow ; but that he is a Man of Honour, I dispute. He is a *Free-Mason*, we know not whether the secret Transactions of *Masons* are honourable ; therefore you cannot put an Affirmative to his being a Man of Honour, because he is a Member of that Body of Men whose Honour is still under Suspicion and undetermined.

You are surprized that your Mother and Sisters, and, above all, your dear *Kitty*, should be so alarm'd. Why should they not? when they heard you were going to incorporate yourself with a Set of Men who are strongly suspected to bear no great Good-will to the Fair Sex: Was it not enough to alarm 'em, I say, when they fear'd to lose you, as a Son, a Brother, a Husband? for what else could they expect, when you were running headlong to herd yourself with those Men? *Cæsar* put away his Wife for being but suspected, and shall you, my Dear, become a Member of a Body thus suspected? I am, indeed, so charitable to believe, that some People carry this Imputation to a greater Severity than they need, for I hope all that is said on this Head is not true; Heav'n forbid it should; and yet we can neither contradict or affirm; it is best known to themselves, whether they are guilty or not; if they are are not guilty, they would do well to acquit themselves of so foul an Imputation.

What your *Free-Masons* in *London* may be I know not, but we have several of the Fraternity here in the Country, who are the very Scum and Dregs of the Common People, idle, indigent Wretches, the Scandal of humane Society; the *Free-Masons* our Way are the greatest Reprobates on Earth; nothing is more scandalous among us than they, insomuch that we
think

think to present them the next Quarter-Sessions.

And so cheap is this Mystery here, that any Man may be made a *Mason* for a Dozen of Beer ; for the Lucre of which, a Set of idle rattling Fellows run up and down the Country to make Profelytes ; and no sooner have they got a poor Fellow among 'em, but they presently suck him dry, for they never leave him, while he has a Penny left. The Good Wives hereabouts conclude themselves ruin'd the Moment their Husbands become *Free-Masons* ; they are sure never to have any Good of them afterwards ; for this *Masonry* makes 'em the veriest Spendthrifts in Life. To make up a Lodge, as they call it, or any such nonsensical Cabal, they will leave their most momentous Affairs ; insomuch, that No-body here cares to employ them.

In a word, to make the best of a bad Matter, the most favourable Opinion I have of this Affair, is, that it is calculated for Sots and Gluttons, utterly unfit for Men of Business and Contemplation. The Vintners, and Victuallers, and Glovers, if they were not the first Inventors, yet they reap all the Profits ; it is a Lure to entice Fools and Spendthrifts to bring Grist to their Mills ; and when it becomes exploded or out of Fashion, they will be the only Losers. Therefore I do not blame them for being *Masons*, or for crying up *Masonry* ; but

should be very sorry they should do it at the Expence of your Fortune, Health, and Reputation.

Your Affectionate Father, &c.

P. S. Don't make a Paper War of this; yet if you can set aside any of my Arguments, I shall not be angry, for I had rather convince than constrain you into a Compliance; but if you cannot get your Friends the *Free-Masons* to trust you with a Bill of Fare, you are on the wrong Side of the Hedge, and must come over at last.



LET

LETTER IV.

S I R,

I Am glad you are not angry at my impertinent Expostulation ; but you charg'd so home upon the *Free-Masons*, that common Humanity oblig'd me to vindicate the Injur'd. Surely, Sir, you must be strongly incens'd against these Men, to be so warm in your Accusation as to admit of no Negative in their Defence. You draw the strongest Inferences from every Conjecture imaginable, so that 'tis impossible to contend with you, for you are sure to be too hard for me ; and no doubt but those Wretches you mention, those strolling *Free-Masons* in the Country, have given you a very abject Opinion of *Masonry* ; but I assure you, Sir, it is quite otherwise here ; Gentlemen of the best Fashion, nay, Men of the first Quality, do Honour to this Order ; they have among 'em the very Top Professors of all Arts and Sciences, Clergymen and Dignitaries of the Church, Officers of the Army, and Gentlemen in Places of high Trust ; so that, I humbly conceive, were there any thing in *Masonry* prejudicial to Church or State, these Gentlemen would doubtless discover it ; and as for the remote and very severe Imputation you hint at,

at, I have tax'd Sir *Thomas* with it, who, upon the Honour of a Gentleman, the Word of a Friend, the Oath of a Christian, and all the most solemn Asseverations imaginable, has assur'd me, that tacit Reflection upon the *Free-Masons* is injurious to the last Degree.

No, Sir, had I the least Suspicion of any thing so vile in *Masonry*, I would never be its Advocate; Sir *Thomas* knows my Complexion too well to propose it to me, were there any thing in it injurious to the dear darling Sex; as for him, he is a Woman's Man every Inch, and would blow the whole Fraternity, I am sure, had he the least Suspicion of such Practices.

But *Masonry* here is upon another Footing to what it is in the Country; it is not a Dozen Pots of Beer, nor a Dozen Gallons of Wine, will make a Man a *Mason* in *London*; if ever I am made, I do not propose to be made alone, but to be provident, as Serjeants at Law are, who club towards a Call; even then I shall hardly come off under 20 Guineas, so cheap is it in *London*. But who would grudge 20 Guineas to be introduced into the best of Company; to be put on a Footing with Gentlemen of the first Character; nay, to be made an Equal with Men of the first Quality and highest Qualifications, and not only so, but to have Access to the greatest Men in all Courts by the *Signs of Masonry*, who are obliged

obliged to receive you as a Brother ; and while others dance Attendance, a *Mason* may accost boldly, and be sure to be heard : This is, I think, no small Advantage to a Man who would rise in the World, and one of the principal Reasons why I would be a *Mason*.

To be intrusted with the Secrets of *Masonry*, which for so many Ages have been kept entire to that Fraternity, is no small Temptation ; the Secrets must certainly be worth keeping, and the Oath most coercive which obliges such Secrecy. Since in so great a Space of Time, not one of 'em have been yet reveal'd. Nay, tho' some drunken idle Fellows have sometimes been Masters of the Secrets of *Masonry*, yet have they not divulg'd them on any Temptation or Provocation, but have had the Wit to keep 'em secret spite of the Infatuation of Drink, or the Allurements of Women ; insomuch, that the Secrets of *Masonry* are yet hid from all but *Masons* Eyes, and are likely so to continue to the World's End.

Since, therefore, there is no Hurt in *Masonry* but what is presumptively and unjustly imputed, it may, with more Reason be presumed there is much Benefit and Profit therein, by reason it has lately made so great a Progress, and so many ingenious and honourable Gentlemen daily become Members of this Fraternity, nay, sue for Admittance ; and I am very inclinable

to believe, that it is not the Lucre of a Treat, &c. which makes so many *Free-Masons* pressing on their Friends to incorporate with them, but a noble and a friendly Desire of having those they love share the Benefits of *Masonry*, and I dare say, this is the only Motive why Sir *Thomas* has been so pressing upon this Head, for I know he is above any fordid Views.

And for a Bill of Fare, I have sent you herewith the Book of the Constitutions of *Free-Masons*, which, in my humble Opinion, utterly extenuates all the unjust Accusations laid to their Charge. This Book will shew you the Antiquity, Dignity, and Usefulness of *Masonry*. You will see that, far from countenancing any thing immoral, the *Mason* is under greater Restrictions in private Life than another Man, in so much, that he must be a very good Man indeed who is truly a *Mason*. This, I hope, may in some measure mitigate that very severe Prejudice you have against *Masons* and *Masonry*, in Expectation of which, I wait with Impatience for your Answer. And remain,

Sir, &c.

LETTER V.

Dear Child,

THE Pleasure your last gave me is inconceivable; and tho' you maintain the contrary Part of the Argument, yet I am pleased to find you do it so well. On my Conscience your last Letter was worth all the rest; and I have a good mind to hold the Controversy a little longer on purpose to keep you up to your Spirit. If the *Free-Masons* do not erect a Statue to your Memory, they are the most ungrateful Devils upon Earth; for never was so much made out of Nothing before.

It is very hard I should not give my Consent for your being a *Mason* after all this, but I cannot help it; not that I am so tenacious as not to bear Conviction. But it so falls out, that tho' your Arguments carry some Force, yet the Cause you have espoused will not bear a Defence. All that you have said, or can say, is only upon Conjecture, and by way of Mitigation and Excuse.

Admit therefore that those Criminal Imputations laid to the *Masons* Charge are Unjust; admit that there are Men of Learn-

ing, &c. among 'em, and that their Behaviour is above Censure, yet the best you can make of the whole Affair is but a Foolery of Fooleries, a pompous Way of Trifling, so like Childrens Play, that it is nothing better.

I would not have the *Masons* trace the Antiquity of it, for the farther they go back; the more they expose themselves, because they will find, that Journeymen *Masons* made themselves so obnoxious to the Government in former Days that by an Act of Parliament passed in the 3d Year of *Henry* the VIth, it is made no less than Felony for *Masons* to assemble themselves in Chapters and Assemblies. Doubtless there must be some extraordinary Cause for so severe a Penalty, not inflicted by the Caprice or Prejudice of any particular Persons, but by the joint Consent and Authority of King, Lords and Commons, in Parliament assembled. The Occasion I take to be this; that *Masons*, by reason of their working many together, minded more Tipling and Caballing than Business, continually plotting to encrease their Wages, and abridge their Hours of Work. And as it is reasonably to be supposed they did not overwork themselves, so it may be as easily imagined they sweetned their Labour with all manner of Drollery and Trifles, insomuch that, by a continual whetting of each others Wit, they became a Set of quaint merry Fellows; and, as they
were

were all of a String, had generally all the Talk to themselves at Ale-houses and merry Meetings. This drew on them the Admiration and Applause of the giddy Part of Mankind, who coveting their Company, and imitating their Extravagancies, were, by way of Approbation, called *Masons*; which artful Piece of Flattery procured them many good Treats and Merry-makings, so that they got more by Sweetning than Working, and therefore took it into their Heads to institute an Order of their own, and dub any idle Fellow a *Free Mason*, who would give them a Dinner. This brought all the dissolute Youth of those Times over to their Party, insomuch that an affected Quaintness and Spirit of Cant grew predominant; and if a Father corrected his Son, or a Master his Servant, the *Masons* were sure to revenge it; for they grew as mischievous as so many Outlaws, insomuch that the Government was obliged to take Notice of them.

Sir *John Falstaffe*, as drawn by the inimitable *Shakespear*, is, in my Opinion, the best Picture of a *Free Mason* I ever met with; it exactly suits the Idea I have of these Men. His quaint odd Phrases and Inversions of Words, seem so much of a Piece with the Cant contained in the Book you sent me, that I can hardly think otherwise. The Author or Compiler has taken much Pains to little Purpose; for he cannot wash the Black-a-moor white. To what

purpose does he set out in that pompous Manner, and deduce *Masonry* from *Noah* and his three Sons, *Shem*, *Ham*, *Japhet*? or, as he inverts the Words, and (Page 3.) *Japhet*, *Shem* and *Ham*, all *Masons* true? To what purpose does he make *Masons* of *Noah* and his Sons, who never handled a Trowel in their Lives, and were, at best, but *Shipwrights*?

He is sure of carrying his Point, who affirms what no Body contradicts. I allow as well as he, that Houses and Palaces were built many thousand Years ago; but who knows not that? *Adam* may be as well called a Master *Taylor* as a Master *Mason*; for we read of his making an Apron, *Gen. iii. ver. 7.* but not a Word of his building a House or Hovel; for, with my Reverend Author's Leave, they were but poor *Masons* in the early Ages of the World, and contented themselves with little Huts and Cottages. We read little of *Masonry* till the building of *Babel*, and then they were so presumptuous to attempt a Tower, whose Top should reach unto Heaven, *Gen. chap. xi. ver. 4.* for which Reason the Lord scattered them abroad upon the Face of all the Earth, *ver. 8.* To what End therefore does your Author draw out so many Pages? Or to what End make such a long Detail of Buildings and Builders, with that important Face, as if the Welfare of the World depended on it? When alas, at last, it is only to tell us, that there were Houses built
in

in Days of Yore, and that those Houses were built by *Masons*. What a Discovery! nothing can equal it, but to inform the World that our Forefathers wore Garments, which Garments were made by *Tailors*; so that, in my humble Opinion, a *Taylor* is as useful a Man as a *Mason*: and I will match my Knights of the Thimble against his Knights of the Trowel, for what he dares. In short, I don't see any Reason why they who have *Adam*, or the Worshipful Fraternity of *Cordwainers*, who have *St. Crispin* for their Grand Master, may not form Lodges, and make as good a Figure as the *Masons*.

Thus much for the Antiquity and Usefulness of *Masonry*. As for its Dignity and Authority, I am at a Loss; for I see no Authority but what is point blank against it; tho' indeed your Author seems to palliate this, by calling that Parliament who pass'd the Act against *Masons*, a set of ignorant illiterate Men, too much influenced by the Clergy; but we have only his bare Word for it: for I take the very Statute to explain and defend it self, it assigns Reason enough in all Conscience for its Existence; so I shall condemn him out of his own Mouth, by borrowing his own Quotation.

Tertio Henrici Sexti, Cap. I. An. Dom. 1425.

Title. Masons shall not confederate themselves in Chapters and Congregations.

“Whereas by yearly Congregations and Confederacies, made by the *Masons* in their General

“ neral Assemblies, the good Course and Effect
 “ of the Statutes for Labourers be openly violated
 “ and broken, in Subversion of the Law, and to
 “ the great Damage of all the Commons ; our said
 “ Sovereign Lord the King, willing in this
 “ Case to provide a Remedy, by the Advice and
 “ Assent aforesaid, and at the special Request of
 “ the Commons, hath ordained and established,
 “ that such Chapters and Congregations shall
 “ not be hereafter holden ; and if any such be
 “ made, they that cause such Chapters and Con-
 “ gregations to be assembled and holden, if they
 “ thereof be convict, shall be judged for Felons,
 “ and that the other Masons that come to such
 “ Chapters and Congregations be punished by Im-
 “ prisonment of their Bodies, and make Fine and
 “ Ransome at the King’s Will.

This Clause confirms all my Conjectures
 on this Head, and proves ’em to be a Set of
 troublesome Fellows indeed, when their very
 Meetings are made Felony.

But now I have the Book before me, I
 must ask an Explanation of this Expression,
 P. 38. *because being a Woman, she could not be
 made a Mason.*

Here is shown a manifest Slight of the Fair
 Sex in the Queen’s Person. Were the Se-
 crets so lewd or wicked, they dare not let
 ’em approach the Ear of her who was the
 Nursing Mother of her People, in whose
 Bosom was hid the Mysteries and Secrets
 of

of State? Doubtless she had very good Cause to suspect 'em, or she had never been so inveterate to them as she was all her Reign.

Your *Mason* Author next proceeds to the Charges of a *Free Mason*, the general Regulations, and an Approbation of *Masonry* by *Masons*, which, with a few execrable Ballads of his own, conclude this miserable Performance, the worst that ever my Eyes beheld ; nor would I read it over again on any Temptation. Nevertheless, to let you see the Sublimity of this Mystery, I have taken the Pains to transcribe part of these important Charges.

Of the Management of the Craft in Working.

“ All *Masons* shall work honestly on working Days, that they may live creditably on
 “ *holy Days* ; and the Time appointed by the
 “ Laws of the Land, or confirm'd by Custom,
 “ shall be observed.

“ The most expert of the *Fellow-Craftsmen*
 “ shall be chosen or appointed the *Master*,
 “ or Overseer of the *Lord's Work* ; who is to
 “ be called *Master* by those that work under
 “ him. The *Craftsmen* are to avoid all ill
 “ Language, and to call each other by no dis-
 “ obliging Name, but *Brother* or *Fellow* ; and
 “ to behave themselves courteously within
 “ and without the *Lodge*.

“ The *Master*, knowing himself to be able
 “ of *Cunning*, shall undertake the *Lord's*
 “ Work

" Work as reasonably as possibly, and truly
 " dispend his Goods as if they were his own;
 " nor to give more Wages to any Brother or
 " Apprentice than he really may deserve.

" Both the *Master* and the *Mason* receiving
 " their Wages justly, shall be faithful to the
 " *Lord*, and honestly finish their Work, whe-
 " ther *Task* or *Journey*; nor put the Work to
 " *Task* that hath been accustom'd to *Journey*.

" None shall discover Envy at the Prospe-
 " rity of a Brother, nor supplant him, or
 " put him out of his Work, if he be capable
 " to finish the same; for no Man can finish
 " another's Work so much to the *Lord's* Profit,
 " unless he be thoroughly acquainted with
 " the Designs and Draughts of him that be-
 " gan it.

" When a *Fellow-Craftsman* is chosen *Warden*
 " of the Work under the *Master*, he shall be
 " true both to *Master* and *Fellows*, shall care-
 " fully oversee the Work in the *Master's* Ab-
 " sence to the *Lord's* Profit; and his Brethren
 " shall obey him.

" All *Masons* employ'd, shall meekly receive
 " their Wages without Murmuring or Mu-
 " tiny, and not desert the *Master* till the
 " Work is finished.

" A younger Brother shall be instructed in
 " Working, to prevent spoiling the Mate-
 " rials for want of Judgment, and for
 " encreasing

“ encreasing and continuing of *Brotherly Love*.

“ All the Tools used in working shall be approved by the Grand Lodge.

“ No *Labourer* shall be employ'd in the proper Work of *Masonry*; nor shall *Free Masons* work with those that are not free, without an urgent Necessity; nor shall they teach *Labourers* and *unaccepted Masons*, as they should teach a *Brother* or *Fellow*.

Now, in the Name of Dulness, what has all this to do with Gentlemen, or Men of a liberal Education? What have they in their boasted Charges, Regulations, &c. which are not found in a much greater Perfection among Porters, Carmen, or any other Set of inferiour Tradesmen, who keep a Box for the Relief of each other? I give you my Word and Honour, I have seen better Orders compiled for the use of a Two-penny Club, than any the *Free Masons* can boast of. That Gentlemen therefore should be thus taken in and become their Bubbles, is what surprizes me beyond Measure; but that you, *my Dear*, should not have Fortitude enough to defend your self from such idle Temptations, is no small Concern to me.

What Authority have these Men for their pretended Fraternity, any other than *Don Quixot* for his Knighthood. In my Opinion they are equally ridiculous; and we

may with as much Solemnity venerate *Masonry*, as we may do Homage to the King and Queen chosen on a Twelfth Night. All these Drolleries are well enough by way of Banter, but will bear no Test if you grow serious. Forbear then, my Child, to be any longer their Advocate, for I give you my Word you have espoused the wrong Side of the Question. But say you, there are Men of Quality, Dignitaries of the Church, and many others of Consideration, *Free Masons*. To which I answer, that there is no Act of Parliament yet in force to oblige every Man of Quality to be a Man of Sense. There have been Fools with Titles long before now, and may, when you and I are dead and rotten; but I should be very sorry to hear that any Clergyman whatever should so far degrade his sacred Function as to contaminate it with the wretched Fooleries of *Baccanalian* Riots. I hope the *Apron*, which is one of the Symbols of your Order, was never put on by any Man on whom the Bishop had laid his Hands, and endued the Robe of Righteousness. If any Person has so done, it has consequently made his Ordination of none Effect; and were I a Prelate in Power, I would severely punish such Wretches who should put over or under that sacred Habit, the Trappings of the Devil. As for your Story of the Universality of *Masonry*, it's all a Juggle. You are deceived to the last Degree. I have been in *France*, *Spain*, and *Italy*, yet never heard a Word of this Stuff before. You would be laughed to scorn in any

any of those Countries, to mention any Thing so compleatly ridiculous.

As for their Secrets, they have been discovered over and over. But such is the Assurance of these *Masons*, they always tell you, you are in the Wrong, tho' at the same time they know you to be never so much in the Right. Thus with this peremptory Negative they baffle all Mankind; it being always in their Power to say, that you have not hit on the Thing. But the Secrets, if a little Canting Catechism may be called a Secret, has been long enough exploded. Yet the *Masons* have so much Brotherly Love as to lie heartily for one another, and contradict even Truth it self, to carry their Point. This is the only Thing wherein they are unanimous; and this Assurance carries them through every Thing.

I remember, when I was last in Town, there was a Specimen of their Examinations published in the *Post-Boy*; but so industrious were the *Masons* to suppress it, that in a Week's time not one of the Papers was to be found; where-ever they saw 'em they made away with them. They went from Coffee-house to Coffee-house, and tore them privately out of the Books. Those they could not come at so easily they bought, even at the extravagant Price of 2 s. 6 d. and 5 s. a Paper. By this means there is hardly one to be met with. I cannot charge my Mind with the Date of the Paper; but if you go to the

Publisher's, you will find the Truth of what I assert; and I would have you, by any Means, purchase or procure a Copy of such *Post-Boy*. I wonder it was never reprinted. Surely they have not stript ev'n the Printer of his Specimen!

The *Free Masons* were prodigiously nettled at the Publication of this *Post-Boy*; yet, according to their wonted Assurance, they put a good Face on the Matter, and said there was nothing in it; but, at the same time, huddled up the Affair with all the Privacy imaginable; and presently put out a sham Discovery to invalidate the other. But you may depend upon it, that in the *Post-Boy* is a genuine Discovery; for a Friend of mine, who was a *Mason*, but at the same time very sick of the Affair, tho' he did not tell me, *totidem verbis*, yet he let me understand, I was not mistaken, in taking it for the real Juggle and Cant of *Masonry*.

You talk of being frugal as to the Expence: And propose to imitate the Serjeants at Law, who club towards a Call. I should never grudge any Expence for a *Coif*, but shall think much of a Shilling for an *Apron*.

Leave Men of Fortune and Leisure therefore to run into what Extravagancies they please; but be not you allured by their Example. Sacrifice not your Health, Fortune and Reputation to the Caprice of these

these Men, but pursue your Studies till you make it necessary for them to know you. They will serve you then for their own Sakes. I had rather you should be known to Men of Quality, as a Man of Business, and keep your distance, than become familiar with them as a Man of Pleasure, and, for the Honour of their Acquaintance, waste your Noon of Life in their Company; yet so little Master are you of your own Enjoyments, that you must be subordinate to them in all your Pleasures, subject to be snubb'd and controul'd whenever my Lord pleases to take it in his Head to be out of Humour; and you must either submit or be discarded. In short, my Dear, Equals are the best Companions. I would neither have you keep Company above nor below your self; nor would I have you intrude your self, or be drawn in to any mixt Assemblies, Clubs and Societies, in which there is much Company, and with which *London* but too much abounds. Let your Friends be few and well chosen; and wait with Patience till the King and Country call you to Dignities, which are more substantial than all the Imaginary, Romantick Titles conferred over a Bottle by *Masons*, or any other Club or Set of Men whatever.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

Honoured Sir,

I find I must drop the Argument, since you grow warm in the Debate. It is more commendable in me to quit the Field, than to maintain it against so pow'rful an Antagonist; for alas! what Share can I have in the Engagement, when I stand but on the defensive Side, to Parry only, not daring to give an Assault, lest I hurt or offend a Father. It is dangerous playing with edged Tools; therefore I lay down my Weapon while all is well, as I hope it is not otherwise; for I have advanced nothing with an Intention of offending; and I know you have too much Goodness to take an Offence where none was meant. All that I have done, has been in Pursuance of your Commands, which are the sole Arbitrators of my Thoughts and Actions; and to shew you how implicitly I obey your Will, I have this Day given a final Denial to Sir Thomas, and conjur'd him by our Friendship never to solicit me more on that Head. So that you may assure my honoured Mother, my Sisters, and dear Kitty, that I am determined not to be a *Free Mason*; not that I can ever be made to believe they are so pernicious a Sect as the generality of People, through

through Prejudice, imagine. I know too many honourable and worthy Men of the Fraternity to think ungenerously of 'em. I am, however, so far convinced, that I think it a Matter of no great Moment, a meer Chip in Pottage, and therefore would run no Hazard on that Account. It may be, as you say, a pompous Way of Trifling, but I dare say it is inoffensive in it self; nor can I think the *Free Masons* ought to be so severely censured for a little harmless Mirth. The less Mystery there is in their Signs, &c. the more Diversion must they have in raising the Admiration and Curiosity of all Mankind, by such Drollery. Their Sport is increased by the World's Anger; and the touchy Part of Mankind are the best of their Game. This is the worst Construction I can put on the Meetings of *Masons*; and if they are not better than other Clubs, they are not worse; nor can they ever be pernicious till Mirth is so. I long to hear from you, but beg you will change the Subject; for with a Father there is no contending.

I remain,

S I R,

Your most obedient Son and Servant.